

UNCLASSIFIED

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E RUEHC #2608 1441616  
NY CCCCC ZZH  
241600Z MAY 79  
M SECSTATE WASHDC  
INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 4718  
BT

STATE 132608

FOLLOWING REPEAT RIO DE JANEIRO 2160 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO  
SAO PAULO 18 MAY 79, QTE:

RIO DE JANEIRO 2160

.O. 12065: GDS 5/18/85 (DEXTER, JOHN B.) OR-M  
AGS: SHUM, BR  
SUBJECT: (U) HABEGGER CASE

1. (U) JORNAL DO BRASIL (JB) OF MAY 8 REPORTED RIO  
CARDINAL EUGENIO SALES' COMPLAINT REGARDING PUBLICATION  
BY THE MAGAZINE ISTO E OF THE CONTENTS OF FIRST OF  
THREE LETTERS HE HAD SENT TO THE WIFE OF ARGENTINE  
JOURNALIST NORBERTO HABEGGER, WHO DISAPPEARED IN RIO  
IN EARLY AUGUST 1978.

2. (U) MRS. HABEGGER CONTACTED CARDINAL SALES AT  
SECRET LATIN AMERICAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE IN  
BUENOS AIRES, FOLLOWING WHICH HE WROTE TO HER ASKING THAT SHE  
ADVISE HIM OF ANY PLANS SHE MIGHT HAVE TO VISITING  
BRAZIL SO THAT HE COULD HAVE A CLERIC MEET HER AT THE  
AIRPORT AND ESCORT HER TO A LOCAL CONVENT. HIS CONCERN  
FOR HER SAFETY WAS BECAUSE OF "ARGENTINE POLICE"  
LOCATED IN RIO. THE LETTER WAS FIRST DIVULGED IN MEXICO.

3. (U) ACCORDING TO JB ARTICLE (APPARENTLY QUOTING  
ISTO E) HABEGGER ARRIVED RIO JULY 31, 1978, FROM  
MEXICO USING ALIAS HECTOR ESTERAN CUELLO. IMMEDIATELY  
AFTER ARRIVAL HE PHONED HIS WIFE: LAST TIME SHE HEARD  
FROM HIM WAS ON AUGUST 3. SHE BELIEVES HE WAS KIDNAPPED  
BY ARGENTINE POLICE, "POSSIBLY WITH THE HELP OF  
BRAZILIAN POLICE." BRAZILIAN JUSTICE MINISTRY, IN  
RESPONSE TO HER INQUIRY, HAS VERIFIED THAT HE ENTERED  
BRAZIL JULY 3, BUT HAS NO RECORD OF HIS DEPARTURE,  
IN EITHER NAME. MRS. HABEGGER ACKNOWLEDGED HER HUSBAND  
IS SECRETARY OF THE POLITICAL BRANCH OF THE PERONIST  
MONTONERO MOVEMENT.

4. UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE SAYS HE HAS NO INFORMATION  
ON THIS CASE, HABEGGER NOT BEING A MANDATED  
REFUGEE AND NEITHER HE NOR MRS. HABEGGER HAVING EVER  
APPROACHED THE UNHCR IN RIO.

5. COMMENT: THOUGH IT HAS NOT YET GENERATED MUCH  
PUBLICITY, THIS CASE COULD CONCEIVABLY DEVELOP INTO ANOTHER  
CASE CELEBRATED LIKE THE LILIAN CELIBERTI/UNIVERSINDO  
KIDNAPPING CASE IN PORTO ALEGRE. THE CARDINAL  
HAS LONG BEEN ACTIVE IN ASSISTANCE TO ARGENTINE REFUGEES,  
SUBJECT THAT HE HAS MENTIONED IN SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS  
WITH ME. IN AT LEAST ONE CONVERSATION, ON JANUARY 25,  
1978, HE BROUGHT THE SUBJECT UP AND EXPRESSED CONCERN  
OVER OPERATIONS AGAINST REFUGEES IN RIO BY ARGENTINE  
POLICE ACTING, HE SURMISED, OUT OF THE ARGENTINE  
CONSULATE.

6. EMBASSY CONCURS.

NOTE CHRISTOPHER

2608

TO	ACT	INF	TO	ACT	INF
AMB					
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MAY 24 17 02 79

Action F/H  
File  
5/24/79  
AZ068

5/38

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)  
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/PS  
Margaret P. Griefeld, Director  
Exemption(s):  
☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny  
Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full  
( ) Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to  
Date Declassify on Reason

UNCLASSIFIED

BA-9  
4-12-76

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